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News Analysis (01 Jan, 2019)

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Monuments of National Importance

Archaeological Survey of India has declared following monuments of national importance:

- The ancient **Neemrana Baori** in Rajasthan's Alwar district;
- The **Group of Temples at Ranipur Jharail** in Odisha's Bolangir district;
- The **Vishnu Temple in Pithoragarh district**, Uttarakhand;
- **High Court Building in Nagpur**, Maharashtra,
- Two Mughal-era monuments in Agra — **Haveli of Agha Khan and Hathi Khana.**

High Court Building Nagpur

- The Nagpur High Court building is called a **Poem in Stone because of its beautiful structure.**
- The most conspicuous feature of the High Court frontage is the Dome, the grand entrance, both towers, and the majestic staircase.
- It was designed by **Architect H.A.N. Medd.**
- **Greek influence can be seen prominently in the columns.** The predominant Roman features can be seen in the ornamentation of both square and arched alcoves.
- The Renaissance drum is cylindrical and elongated. Over it are Rajasthani Chhatris. The dome has the resonance of the soprano.

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Neemrana Baori- Rajasthan

- The **Neemrana Stepwell was built in 18th century by Thakur Janak Singh.**
- It is also known as **Rani Ki Baoli in the local language.**
- The primary cause of the creation of this step well was to create employment during the famine that hit the area during that period.
- It is located in **Alwar district of Rajasthan.**

Ranipur -Jharial- Odisha

- A group of temples near **Ranipur Jharial in Balangir district of Odisha** has been declared as a monument of national importance.
- Ranipur Jharial is known as **“Soma Tirth” in scriptures.**
- It is a **combination of** religious faiths of **Shaivism, Buddhism, Vaishnavism, and Tantrism.**
- The site is famous for **Chausath (64) Yogini temples** or the temples without roofs—known as the hypaethral temples.

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- ASI is the premier organization for the archaeological **research, scientific analysis, excavation of archaeological sites, conservation and preservation of protected monuments.**
- It is an attached office under the **Department of Culture (Ministry of Culture).**
- **ASI was founded in 1861** by Alexander Cunningham who became its first Director-General.

NASA Spaceship Reaches Ultima Thule

NASA’s New Horizons spacecraft will fly past the icy object nicknamed **Ultima Thule (TOO-lee)** in Kuiper belt.

- Ultima Thule is located 1.6 billion kilometers beyond Pluto and 6.4 billion kilometers from Earth.
- The spacecraft will fly past within 3,500 kilometers of Ultima Thule.

Ultima Thule

- This Kuiper Belt object was **discovered** by the **Hubble Space Telescope in 2014.**
- Officially it is known as **2014 MU69** and is nicknamed as Ultima Thule.
- Thule means the most distant places beyond the known world.

Significance

- Ultima Thule will be the **farthest object ever visited by a spacecraft.**
- Ultima Thule would have relics dating back to solar system’s origin 4.5 billion years ago. No spacecraft has visited anything so primitive. This will help in **understanding the origins of our solar system.**
- The mission will also help in **studying the Ultima Thule.**

New Horizon

- **Launched:** Jan. 19, 2006
- **Pluto Flyby:** July 14, 2015
- **Ultima Thule Flyby:** Jan. 1, 2019
- **Goal:** Study Pluto, its moons, and Kuiper Belt objects.

Kuiper Belt

- The Kuiper Belt (also known as the Edgeworth–Kuiper belt) is a region of the Solar System that **exists beyond the eight major planets**, extending from the orbit of Neptune (at 30 AU) to approximately 50 AU from the Sun. **(1 Astronomical Unit (AU) = distance between the Earth and the Sun)**
- It is similar to the asteroid belt, in that it contains many small bodies, all remnants from the Solar System's formation.

Export Promotion Council (EPC) Established for MSME Sector

The **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)** has recently established an **Export Promotion Cell (EPC)** with an aim to create a sustainable ecosystem for entire MSME development.

- MSME sector has a huge impact on Foreign Exchange earnings and has large export potential.
- As per the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCIIS), the value of MSME related products is USD 147,390.08 million and share of MSME related products in the country's exports was 48.56% during 2017-18.
- In some cases like sports goods, they account for about 100% share to the total exports of the sector.
- In addition to the above, MSMEs account for about 85-90 % of leather exports; around 6.11% to India's manufacturing GDP (about 33%to the manufacturing output) and about 25% to the GDP from service activities.

Objective of EPC

- Evaluate readiness of MSMEs to export their products and services.
- Recognize areas that can be improved to export effectively and efficiently.
- **Integration** of MSME into the **global value chain**.
- The target of **USD 100 billion of exports** from India **by 2020**.
- **Identify potential clusters** which can start exporting directly or through aggregators and export houses with the help of export promotion councils.
- Coordinate with other departments and export promotion councils for **increasing shipments of products like khadi, leather, and coir**.

Governing Council Composition

- **Chaired by Secretary, Ministry of MSME** and Co-chaired by Development Commissioner, Ministry of MSME.
- The council will comprise of senior officials and members from the Ministry of MSME, Commerce, MSME Export Promotion Councils, Export Development Authorities, Commodity Boards, and other bodies.

Key Benefits to MSME

- Simplification of procedures.
- Incentives for higher production of exports.
- Preferential treatments to MSMEs in the market development fund.
- Simplification of duty drawback rules.
- Products of MSME exporters are displayed in international exhibitions free of cost.
- Export Promotion Programmes/Measures

Marketing Assistance And Export Promotion Scheme

- **Participation in the International Exhibitions/ Fairs.**
- **Training Programmes** on Packaging for Exports.
- **Marketing Development Assistance** Scheme for MSME exporters (MSME-MDA).
- In addition, the above scheme also provides for financial assistance up to Rs. 2.00 lakhs for commissioning specific market studies and assistance for initiating/contesting anti-dumping cases are available to MSME Association limited to 50% of the total cost or Rs. 1.00 lakh whichever is less.
- The **Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS)** was introduced in the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2015-20 w.e.f. 1st April 2015 with the objective to offset infrastructural inefficiencies and associated costs involved in exporting goods/products which are produced /manufactured in India including products produced/manufactured by MSME Sector.
- The Government has implemented the **Niryat Bandhu Scheme with an objective to reach out to the exporters from Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** and mentor them through orientation programmes, counselling sessions, individual facilitation, etc., on various aspects of foreign trade to enable them to get into international trade and boost exports from India.

[Read More About MSME](#)

Centre Extends AFSPA in Nagaland

The entire State of **Nagaland** has been **declared 'disturbed area'** for six more months up to June 2019, under Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) 1958.

- In a notification, the **Ministry of Home Affairs** said that the Central government is of the opinion that the area comprising the whole of State of Nagaland is in such a disturbed and dangerous condition that the use of armed forces in aid of civilian power is necessary.
- The decision has been taken as killings, loot and extortion have been going on in various parts of the State which necessitated the action.

Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958

- The **Act was enacted in 1958** to bring under control what the government considered 'disturbed areas'.
- **Jammu & Kashmir has a similar but separate act** Armed Forces (Jammu & Kashmir) Special Powers Act, 1990.
- It is effective in the whole of **Nagaland, Assam, Manipur** (excluding seven assembly constituencies of Imphal) and **parts of Arunachal Pradesh**. The Centre revoked it in Meghalaya on April 1, 2018.
- The Act **empowers the Governor/Administrator of state/UT to declare an area as 'disturbed'**. Once declared, the region has to maintain the status quo for a minimum of three months (according to Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976).
- As per the Act, it can be invoked in places where the use of armed forces in aid of civil power is necessary.
- The AFSPA gives power to the Army and Central forces deployed in "disturbed areas" **to search premises and arrest without warrant, to use force even to the extent of causing death**.
- It also gives **immunity to security forces** in carrying out various operations and provides cover to forces from prosecution and legal suits without the Centre's sanction.
- To check arbitrariness there should be a **periodic review of 'disturbed area' every six months**.

Debate Around AFSPA

- AFSPA has become a controversial act due to the **wide-ranging power** it gives to armed forces and **alleged human rights violation** under the act.
- There were questions about the **constitutionality of AFSPA**, given that **law and order is a state subject**.
- **Supreme Court's Judgement:** The Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of **AFSPA in a 1998 judgment (Naga People's Movement of Human Rights v. Union of India)**.

In this judgment, the Supreme Court held that

- a suo-motu declaration can be made by the Central government, however, it is desirable that the state government should be consulted by the central government before making the declaration;
- the declaration has to be for a limited duration and there should be a periodic review of the declaration 6 months have expired;
- while exercising the powers conferred upon him by AFSPA, the authorized officer should use minimal force necessary for effective action,
- **Jeevan Reddy Committee:** In November 2004, the Central government appointed a five-member committee headed by Justice B P Jeevan Reddy to review the provisions of the act in the northeastern states.

The committee recommended that:

- **AFSPA should be repealed** and appropriate provisions should be inserted in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967
 - The **Unlawful Activities Act should be modified** to clearly specify the powers of the armed forces and paramilitary forces and
 - **Grievance cells** should be set up **in each district** where the armed forces are deployed.
 - **Second ARC Recommendation:** The **5th report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)** on public order has also recommended the **repeal of the AFSPA**. However, These recommendations have not been implemented.
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